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Message Text

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ACTION INR-05

INFO OCT-01 CIAE-00 SSO-00 ISO-00 NEA-06 INRE-00 /012 W
---------- 048758
O R 291301Z SEP 76
FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8678
INFO AMCONSUL BOMBAY
AMCONSUL CALCUTTA
AMCONSUL MADRAS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 NEW DELHI 14409

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-4
TAGS: PINR, IN (SINGH, KEWAL)
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR-DESIGNATE TO THE U.S., KEWAL SINGH

REF: STATE 238131

1. IN RESPONSE TO REFTEL'S REQUEST FOR BIO INFORMATION ON AMBASSADOR-DESIGNATE KEWAL SINGH, WE OFFER THE FOLLOWING:

2. KEWAL SINGH WAS BORN JUNE 1, 1915 IN LYALLPUR DISTRICT, PUNJAB (NOW A PART OF PAKISTAN). HE WAS EDUCATED AT FORMAN CHRISTIAN COLLEGE AND LAW COLLEGE, LAHORE, AND AT BALLIOL COLLEGE, OXFORD, ATTENDING THE LATTER FROM 1938 TO 1939. HE HOLDS A B.A. DEGREE WITH HONORS AS WELL AS A LL.B. DEGREE. SINGH JOINED THE INDIAN CIVIL SERVICE (I.C.S.) IN 1939 AND FOR THE NEXT NINE YEARS SERVED IN VAROUS ADMINISTRATIVE POSTS IN THE PUNJAB, SUCH AS ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER, SUB-DIVISIONAL OFFICER, COLONIZATION OFFICER AND DEPUTY COMMISSIONER. HE WAS APPOINTED FIRST SECRETARY AT THE INDIAN EMBASSY IN ANKARA IN MAY, 1948, BECOMING CHARGE D'AFFAIRES THERE IN OCTOBER, 1949. THE NEXT MONTH HE WAS POSTED AS FIRST SECRETARY IN THE INDIAN MILITARY MISSION IN BERLIN. HE LATER SERVED AS FIRST SECRETARY AT THE INDIAN LEGATION IN BONN. FROM 1951 TO 1953 SINGH WAS FIRST SECRETARY AND THEN CHARGE AT THE INDIAN LEGATION
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IN LISBON. HE RETURNED TO INDIA AND BECAME CONSUL GENERAL

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IN PONDICHERRY (1953-54) AND LATER CHIEF COMMISSIONER OF
THE TERRITORY WHEN IT BECAME A PART OF THE INDIAN UNION
(1954-56). AFTER A BRIEF STINT AS A JOINT SECRETARY
IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS IN DELHI, SINGH
WAS APPOINTED AS INDIAN AMBASSADOR TO CAMBODIA IN
FEBRUARY, 1957. IN AUGUST, 1958, HE BECAME AMBASSADOR TO
SWEDEN AND WAS CONCURRENTLY ACCREDITED TO DENMARK AND
FINLAND AS WELL, IN MARCH, 1960.

3. SINGH SUBSEQUENTLY SERVED AS INDIAN DCM IN LONDON
(1962-65), HIGH COMMISSIONER TO PAKISTAN (JUNE, 1965-
AUGUST 1966), AND AMBASSADOR TO THE SOVIET UNION AND
MONGOLIA (1966-68). RETURNING TO DELHI, HE SERVED
AS SECRETARY (WEST) IN THE MEA FROM DECEMBER, 1968
TO LATE 1970. IN THIS POSITION, SINGH WAS THE VIVIL
SERVANT NEXT IN RANK TO FOREIGN SECRETARY T.N. KAUL AND
WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE EUROPE, UK, AFRICA, WEST ASIA,
PAKISTAN AND PROTOCOL DIVISIONS. FROM DECEMBER, 1970,
UNTIL HIS APOINTMENT AS FOREIGN SECRETARY IN DECEMBER,
1972, HE SERVED AS AMBASSADOR TO THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC
OF GERMANY. SINGH REPLACED T.N. KAUL AS FOREIGN SECRETARY
AND HELD THIS POSITION UNTIL MARCH, 1976.

4. THE GERMAN EMBASSY, WITH WHICH KEWAL SINGH HAS HAD
CONTINUING EXCELLENT RELATIONS, HAS INFORMED US THAT HE
WAS CONSIDERED "ONE OF THE GREAT AMBASSADORS" TO THE
FRG AND EXTREMELY EFFECTIVE IN HIS DEALINGS WITH THE GERMAN
GOVERNMENT. IN A FAREWELL CONVERSATION LAST WEEK WITH
THE GERMAN AMBASSADOR, KEWAL SINGH SAID HIS SUCCESS
IN WASHINGTON WOULD DEPEND ON HIS ABILITY TO CONVINCE
INDIA'S POLITICAL INNER CIRCLE OF THE IMPORTANCE OF THE
U.S. AND TO KEEP THE ANTI-US FEELINGS OF SOME AMONG THIS
GROUP UNDER CONTROL. HE THOUGHT THE SOVIETS WOULD NOT WATCH
THIS PROCESS IDLY BUT WOULD TRY TO ADVERSELY AFFECT HIS WORK.
HE SAID HE WAS CONVINCED THAT INDIA NEEDED ECONOMIC
COOPERATION WITH THE WEST IN ORDER TO SOLVE ITS MANY
ECONOMIC PROBLEMS, AND THAT SUCH COOPERATION WAS DEPENDENT
UPON PRODUCING A CERTAIN MINIMUM LEVEL OF POLITICAL
COOPERATION. HE WAS SURE HE HAD THE SUPPORT OF THE PRIME
MINISTER IN HIS TASK.
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5. THE EMBASSY HAS FOUND KEWAL SINGH A MOST
EFFECTIVE FOREIGN SECRETARY. HE IS AN INTELLIGENT,
ARTICULATE ANDURBANE PROFESSIONAL DIPLOMAT. DURING
PERIODS OF TROUBLED US-INDIAN RELATIONS, HE HAS MAINTAINED
COMMUNICATION WITH US OFFICIALS, KEPT US CANDIDLY
INFORMED OF THE VIEWS OF SENIOR INDIAN OFFICIALS AND
CONSISTENTLY AND QUIETLY WORKED FOR THE EASING OF

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IRRITANTS IN INDO-US RELATIONS. HE WAS A MEMBER OF A
TRIO OF INDIAN OFFICIALS WHICH HAD MAXIMUM INFLUENCE
OBVER INDIAN FOREIGN POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC POLICY, THE
OTHER MEMBERS BEING ECONOMIC AFFAIRS SECRETARY, M.G. KAUL,
AND THE PRIME MINISTER'S PRIVATE SECRETARY, P.N. DHAR.
WHILE RESPECTED BY THE PRIME MINISTER, HE HAS NOT, HOWEVER,
EVER BEEN A MEMBER OF HER INNER CIRCLE, WHICH HAS ALWAYS
BEEN SMALL. HE WAS UNDOUBTEDLY SELECTED FOR HIS PRESENT
POSITION BY THE PRIME MINISTER, HOWEVER.

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---------- 048841
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6. WHEN APPROXIMATELY A YEAR AGO INDIAN OFFICIALS BEGAN
AN EFFORT TO IMPROVE THE ATMOSPHERE OF INDIAN-US
RELATIONS, KEWAL SINGH WAS AT THE FOREFRONT OF THIS
EFFORT. HE WAS ALSO ACTIVE IN SEEKING WAYS TO IMPROVE
INDIA'S RELATIONS WITH CHINA. HE THUS AT LEAST SHARES
RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE NEW TRENDS IN INDIAN FOREIGN
POLICY, ONE ASPECT OF WHICH IS A COORDINATED EFFORT TO
IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH THE US. THAT HE WAS SELECTED
AS AMBASSADOR TO THE US PROBABLY MEANS HIS APPOINTMENT
IS INTENDED TO GIVE CONTINUITY TO THESE EFFORTS.

7. KEWAL SINGH'S STYLE IS QUIET AND ALMOST GENTLE. HE
IS SOMETIMES SO CAREFUL IN EXPRESSING A VIEW THAT NON-
DIPLOMATIC OBSERVERS HAVE CLAIMED DIFFICULTY FINDING OUT
WHERE HE STANDS. THE EMBASSY HAS FOUND, HOWEVER, THAT
HE HAS BEEN CLEAR AND EXPLICIT WHERE AREAS OF DIFFERENCE

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BETWEEN THE US AND INDIA HAVE OCCURRED. AT THE SAME TIME,
HE IS ALWAYS MOST DIPLOMATIC IN THE MANNER IN WHICH HE
EXPRESSES THESE DIFFERENCES. ALTHOUGH QUIET IN STYLE,
HE AGGRESSIVELY PURSUES HIS OBJECTIVES AND IS NOT ONE
TO SIT BACK PASSIVELY. HE COMBINES A CONFIDENT
AND SELF-SSURED BEARING WITH A SENSITIVITY FOR THE
FEELINGS OF OTHERS AND AN APPRECIATION FOR THEIR VIEWS
AND ASSISTANCE. THESE LATTER CHARACTERISTICS FREE
KEWAL SINGH FROM THE HANDICAP SUFFERED BY SO MANY OF HIS
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INDIAN FOREIGN SERVICE COLLEAGUES WHOSE CONFIDENCE FREQUENTLY
EMERGES AS ARROGANCE.

8. AFTER HE LEFT MEA IN MARCH 1976, KEWAL SINGH WENT ON
LEAVE. HE NOW SAYS THAT HE WAS OFFERED THE WASHINGTON
APPOINTMENT SOON AFTER HIS RETIREMENT AS FOREIGN SECRETARY,
BUT BECAUSE OF "PROBLEMS" THE APPOINTMENT COULD NOT BE
ANNOUNCED FOR SOME MONTHS. WE KNOW ONE SUCH PROBLEM WAS
THE GOI'S DIFFICULTY OF GETTING T.N. KAUL OUT OF
WASHINGTON. ANOTHER MAY HAVE BEEN REPORTS WHICH HAVE
CIRCULATED IN DELHI (AND IN MOSCOW DURING HIS TOUR THERE)
THAT QWHILE SERVING OVERSEAS, SINGH MAY HAVE ENGAGED IN
QUESTIONABLE FOREIGN CURRENCY DEALINGS. HIS LARGE HOUSE IN
DELHI MAY HAVE GIVEN HIM DIFFICULTY WITH INCOME TAX
INVESTIGATORS. WHATEVERPROBLEMS MAY HAVE CAUSED A DELAY
IN HIS ASSIGNMENT, THEY HAVE NOW APPARENTLY BEEN RESOLVED.

9. MRS. KEWAL SINGH IS WESTERNIZED AND ATTRACTIVE. SHE
IS AN EASY CONVERSATIONALIT, AND HER THOUGHTS TURN
MORE OFTEN TOHOME AND GARDEN THAN TO OUTSIDE AFFAIRS.
SHE WORRIES OVER HER HUSBAND'S HEALTH (HIS SCHEDULE AS
FOREIGN SECRETARY WAS BRUTAL) AND DUTIFULLY ACCOMPANIES
HIM ON HIS PROTOCOL ROUNDS. THE KEWAL SINGH'S HAVE A
DAUGHTER WHO IS MARRIED TO AN INDIAN FOREIGN SERVICE
OFFICER CURRENTLY LIVING IN PARIS. THEY HAD A SON WHO
WAS KILLED IN A FIRE IN 1968. MRS. KEWAL SINGH IS
THE AMBASSADOR'S SECOND WIFE.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: AMBASSADOR DESIGNATE, BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 29 SEP 1976
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: BoyleJA
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976NEWDE14409
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X4
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760367-0820
From: NEW DELHI
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t1976098/aaaaagae.tel
Line Count: 212
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION INR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Reference: 76 STATE 238131
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: BoyleJA
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 26 APR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <26 APR 2004 by CollinP0>; APPROVED <13 AUG 2004 by BoyleJA>
Review Markings:

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Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: AMBASSADOR-DESIGNATE TO THE U.S., KEWAL SINGH
TAGS: PINR, IN, (SINGH, KEWAL)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006